

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the present amendments and following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8 are pending. Claims 1-6 are amended. Claims 7 and 8 are newly added. Support for the amendments to Claims 1, 2, 4, and 6 can be found in Figs. 3 and 4, for example. Support for the amendments to Claims 3 and 5 is self-evident. Support for newly added Claims 7 and 8 can be found in Figs. 3 and 4, for example. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3 were objected to as unclear. Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Fujii et al. (U.S. Patent Pub. 2002/0106267, herein "Fujii").

Regarding the objection to Claims 1-3 as unclear, Claim 1 is amended to recite:

a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion, the first clearance being defined by a predetermined constant distance between a coplanar surface extending outside from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

Accordingly, the first clearance is formed around an entire perimeter of a first opening portion. The first opening portion is formed in the wall of the chamber. There is a constant distance between a surface extending from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall of the chamber on which the first opening portion is formed.

Consequently, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 1 and Claims 2 and 3 depending therefrom are clear, and the objection to Claims 1-3 is overcome for at least the reasons discussed above.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 3 as indefinite, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended independent Claim 2 recites that when the door is just closing said first opening portion, a second clearance is formed between the door and a perimeter of said first opening portion. The second clearance communicates with the first clearance. Amended dependent Claim 3 recites that the second clearance is capable of communicating with said first clearance to form a gas flow path from the chamber to the outside of the chamber. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that as the second clearance is formed when the door is just closing, communication between the first clearance and second clearance as recited in amended dependent Claim 3 is not impossible, and the rejection of dependent Claim 3 as indefinite is overcome.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-6 as anticipated by Fujii, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended independent Claim 1 recites:

A wafer processing apparatus including a mini-environment portion having a chamber therein and configured to transfer a wafer between a clean box having an opening configured to be closed by a lid to house the wafer and the chamber, said apparatus comprising:  
a first opening portion formed on a wall of the chamber, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, the wall opposing the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber,  
wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed with a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion, the first clearance being defined by a predetermined constant distance between a coplanar surface extending outside from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

Accordingly, when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed with a first clearance formed around an entire perimeter of the first opening portion. The first clearance is defined by a predetermined **constant distance between** a coplanar surface extending outside from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall of the chamber on which the first opening portion is formed.

One benefit of the above-described arrangement is that the clean box does not touch the wall of the apparatus, and therefore, turbulence of airflow is reduced when the door of the chamber is opened or closed. Additionally, the constant distance makes airflow more uniform, further reducing turbulence.

In contrast, as shown in Fig. 3A, Fujii describes a clean box (102) that is smaller than the opening in the wall (105)/(105A). In other words, the surface of the container (102) of Fujii is devoid of a surface as recited in amended independent Claim 1 wherein a first clearance is defined **between** a coplanar surface extending outside from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall of the chamber on which the first opening portion is formed.

Moreover, amended independent Claim 1 recites that the first clearance is defined by a predetermined **constant distance** between a coplanar surface extending from the opening of the clean box and an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed. As discussed above, one benefit of maintaining the recited constant distance is that the flow generated around the perimeter of the first opening is more uniform, and therefore, turbulence which may generate contamination is reduced when the door of the chamber is opened and closed.

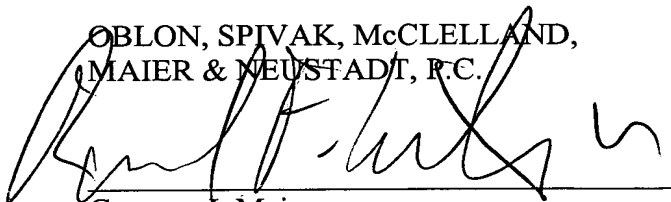
In contrast, as shown in Figs. 2, 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B, the opening of the container (102) is formed at an **angle** with respect to the wall of the chamber, and therefore, the clearance dimension for an upper part of the container (102) is different than the clearance at a lower portion of the container (102). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over Fujii for at least the reasons discussed above.

Dependent Claims 2-6 and newly added dependent Claims 7 and 8 depend from amended independent Claim 1 and patentably distinguish over Fujii for at least the same reasons as amended independent Claim 1 does.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

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